



BENSHAM MANOR School

Ecclesbourne Road, Croydon CR7 7BN

T: 0208 684 0116 E: theoffice@benshammanor.com W: www.benshammanor.co.uk

Headteacher : Mrs Fiona Robinson MA NPQH

Deputy Headteacher: Mrs Kirstie Byrne B.Ed (Hons) NPQH

8/01/2021

Dear families,

I did not think that I would be writing to you all again in lockdown in 2021. I know that you will all be as worried as I am about the fast-moving pace of the Covid virus and how infectious it has become. As I write to you today, the statistics for Croydon are that 1 in every 48 people currently has Covid. Community transmission is very high. There are almost 250 people at Croydon University Hospital being treated for Covid. Yesterday there were 1,162 deaths from Covid in the UK. The statistics are very worrying. The advice from the Government is to please stay at home. The Prime Minister has stated the following:

We have resisted closing schools until now, but in the face of the rapidly rising numbers of cases across the country and intense pressure on the NHS, we now need to use every lever at our disposal to reduce all contacts outside households wherever possible.

We are offering remote learning to all children and to the children of key workers and very vulnerable children we are offering onsite provision. However, the advice at this current time is to stay at home wherever possible. You must ensure that if you are sending your child to attend our onsite provision, they are well. I would like to do a poll to gauge if I had additional space in the onsite provision, would you be willing to send your child in given the current lockdown situation. Could you please complete this by Monday January 11th at 3pm so I can have a clearer picture of your views. It takes less than one minute to complete. The link to access this form is here:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeLQGm6v0I_aLlqRckFvbQ1FTDINhl2Gjm-059eygGtDwPOaA/viewform?vc=0&c=0&w=1&flr=0&gxids=7628

We have begun onsite lateral flow testing of both staff and pupils. Pupils accessing onsite learning had a test on Wednesday. I was so proud of their maturity when it came to the testing process and every child managed incredibly well. All staff are being tested on a weekly basis. Please prioritise completing the Google Form and the paperwork that was sent to you on testing. There is a presentation which has been created by Amy Pearce from the Therapy team on the website which explains to pupils and families how testing will work at Bensham. Please take the time to go through this with your child.

A number of families have applied to the school for laptops. You may have seen in the news that the Government has yet to release a further allocation of laptops to schools. I do not have an unlimited supply of laptops, but we are doing our best to allocate them to those who have asked and have no other devices in the home. Please be aware that if you do receive a laptop, you will be required to collect it from the school office and sign a loan agreement. All laptops must be returned when the



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lockdown period ends. Unfortunately, I have had some issues with laptops being damaged when loaned to families in the last lockdown.

Bensham Manor is offering a blended learning programme. This means that your child will have some 'live' lessons where they will be taught by teachers and some lessons where they will be set activities to complete. I do not believe it is sensible for Bensham students to have 6 hours of face to face online teaching in a day. Teachers are updating timetables and will ensure they are sent out to you by the end of today at the latest. It is imperative that your child does their best to engage with online learning. Where children do not attend online lessons and we have not been informed that they are ill or that there are other family issues, we will call you to do a safeguarding check on your child. ***It is important to note that if your child is in school they will not be able to join the online learning that their class is receiving at home. They will be following an alternative curriculum in school in mixed age groups.***

We are offering a mindfulness session Mon-Thurs at 8.45am for your child to access. This will be run by our Therapy team. This team will also be in touch with individual families whose children currently receive therapy to explain to you how this will work during lockdown. Additionally, the Drama therapist and Counsellor will continue to support pupils remotely. They will contact families to arrange convenient times. If you are worried about your child's mental health during this lockdown then please contact the office and I can arrange for a member of our therapy team to contact you. Please encourage your child to also attend our weekly assembly which is every Friday at 10.30am. Your child will now be spending more time on-line. I wrote to you before Christmas about helping you to keep your children safe online. Please continue to monitor your child's online content and encourage them to report anything suspicious to you.

This has been a very difficult week in terms of staff attendance. There are still a number of staff who are ill and are unable to teach. Therefore, there may be some instances when a teacher is not available. I apologise in advance for any inconvenience.

Those of you with children in Year 11 may also be worrying about the Prime Minister's announcement on the cancellation of the GCSE examinations this year. I too have a child in Year 11 so share your concerns both as a parent and as Head Teacher. The current position suggests that teacher assessments will be used. I do not have the details about how this will actually work but I am liaising with my Examinations Officer who is in constant contact with the exam boards. Once I have a clearer picture, I will write to Year 11 parents. I would urge you not to worry at this time. Teachers know your children very well. I can assure you that all the hard work they have put into their studies so far will not go unrewarded.



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Education and Health Care Plan reviews will continue to go ahead at this time if due. They will be done remotely. Your child's tutor will contact you if a review is due and you will be given two weeks notice of the meeting. For families of pupils in Year 10, their reports will also be with you at the end of January.

Please contact the office if you are in receipt of free school meals and would like to come and collect a food parcel. These are available from next Tuesday and the office will advise you on how to collect these safely. The parcels will consist of two weeks worth of food. If your child is attending onsite provision, then you will not receive a parcel.

The school website is updated regularly. Please have a look. I put all communication on the website. Additionally, there is a latest news page which has all the up to date information and there is also a student page with lots of useful links.

There is a Zoom meeting offering technological support for parents next Tuesday at 11am - the office emailed the details yesterday. I would encourage you to attend if you have any technical questions about remote learning. I will be offering a parent Zoom meeting next Thursday at 3pm. Details to follow. This will be an opportunity to ask me any questions and for me to update you with any new information.

Unlike the last lockdown, the weather is now not so good. However, please do your best, wherever possible, to ensure that your child gets some exercise each day. Getting out in the fresh air will help deliver a positive mental boost. This can be something as simple as walking around the garden if you have a garden, to walking around the block. Please remember however that you must not leave the house if you are self-isolating.

I have been in teaching for 24 years and these are unprecedented times. I know that in 'normal' times school is the best place for children to learn. I understand that home learning is not easy and that you may worry that your child is missing out. Additionally, I am acutely aware that many families have suffered illness, isolation, financial hardship and bereavement over the past few months and now there is the added task of home-schooling. I do not want home-schooling to become a burden and if this is becoming the case over the next few weeks please contact us. I can assure you that all school staff will prioritise your child's learning and mental wellbeing during this period of lockdown and will put mechanisms in place to ensure that any gaps in knowledge are addressed once your child is back in school.

I wish you all the best at this current time. Please stay safe and well and do not hesitate to contact the school if you need any support.

Yours sincerely



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